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AUTHOR Agathen, Jean M.; Farran, Joel M.; Mangelsdorf, Sarah C.
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ABSTRACT

Noting the lack of research on the congruence of children's general self-concepts and parents' perceptions, this study investigated the associations between 4-year-old children's self-concepts and parents' reports of temperament. Fifty-four children, 28 boys and 26 girls, watched the videotaped Children's Self-View Questionnaire. (Data collection continues; projected final N is 70.) Their mothers and fathers completed the Children's Behavior Questionnaire, and observers rated the children's behavior in the laboratory. The children's reports of their self-control were significantly associated with both sets of parents' ratings of their self-control, and mothers' ratings of children's extroversion were negatively correlated with children's reported feelings of rejection. However, boys' reports, considered separately, were not significantly associated with parents' reports of their temperament, whereas girls' self-reports were. (Author)

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TEMPERAMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT IN FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

JEAN M. AGATHEN
JOEL M. FARRAN
SARAH C. MANGELSDORF

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the associations between 4-year-old children's self-concepts and parents' reports of temperament. Fifty-four children, 28 boys and 26 girls, watched the videotaped Children's Self-View Questionnaire. (Data collection continues; projected final N is 70.) Their mothers and fathers completed the Children's Behavior Questionnaire, and observers rated the children's behavior in the laboratory. The children's reports of their self-control were significantly associated with both sets of parents' ratings of their self-control, and mothers' ratings of children's extraversion were negatively correlated with children's reported feelings of rejection. However, boys' reports, considered separately, were not significantly associated with parents' reports of their temperament, whereas girls' self-reports were. These results are interpreted in the light of differences in socialization practices with boys and girls.

INTRODUCTION

There is reason to expect that young children's general self-concepts should be congruent with their parents' views of their temperament. The self-concept is the result of social processes, especially between caregivers and children (Miller et al., 1992; Thompson, in press). Temperament, the set of consistent personal dispositions underlying the expression of activity, reactivity, emotionality, and sociability (Goldsmith et al., 1987), is undoubtedly the focus of much of the interaction between parents and young children. Temperament may be considered the substrate of personality (Rothbart & Ahadi, 1994). One would thus expect that young children's views of their own personalities would reflect their parents' views of their temperament characteristics (Eder & Mangelsdorf, in press).

There has been limited research in this area. Harter and Pike (1984) and Hinde, Tamplin, and Barrett (1993) found some convergence between teachers' and observers' reports, respectively, about young children and children's self-reports. Those results suggest that an inquiry into the convergence between parents' as well as observers' reports of temperament, and young children's views of their own personalities, would be fruitful.

GOALS

1. To examine gender differences in young children's self-concepts, and in their temperament as reported by parents and as assessed in the laboratory.

2. To examine the associations between mothers' and fathers' views of boys and girls.

3. To examine the associations between parents' reports of children's temperament and the children's self-concepts, and to investigate whether or not such associations differ for boys and girls.

4. To examine the relations between children's observed behavior and the children's self-concepts.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS:

- 54 children--28 boys, 26 girls--from 3,9 to 4,3 years (M = 4,0) and their parents

PROCEDURE:

Children's General Self-Concept:

- Children's Self-View Questionnaire (CSVQ; Eder, 1990)

  Three Factors: Self-Control, Rejection, and Self-Acceptance

Parents' Reports of Children's Temperament:

Children's Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ; Rothbart, Ahadi & Hershey, 1994)

Three Factors: Effortful Control, Extraversion, and Negative Affectivity

Videotaped Observation of Children's Behavior:

- Reaction to novel scary toy hanging from ceiling in lab

  Coded for child's fearfulness, aggression, and positive affect

- Reaction to female stranger who invited child to color pictures

Coded for child's sociability and physical proximity to stranger

- Child's activity level while answering self-view questions

RESULTS

1) GENDER DIFFERENCES

In order to investigate gender differences in children's self-concepts and temperament, a series of one-way ANOVAs was performed.

- There were no gender differences in the three factors of the CSVQ, the children's self-concept measure. In other words, boys and girls rated themselves similarly on Self-Control, General Self-Acceptance, and Rejection.

- Child-gender differences were found in parents' reports of temperament. Fathers rated girls lower than boys on Extraversion ($F(1, 45) = 4.93$, $p < .05$). Mothers rated girls higher than boys on Effortful Control ($F(1, 52) = 5.43$, $p < .05$).

- There were no significant gender differences in children's behavior in the lab, except on Activity Level while answering the CSVQ questions: boys were more active than girls ($t(42) = 2.3$, $p < .05$).

2) ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN MOTHERS' AND FATHERS' VIEWS OF BOYS AND GIRLS

In order to examine the agreement between mothers and fathers about their children's characteristics, and to examine whether or not that agreement was different for boys and girls, Pearson correlations between parents' ratings on the three factors of the CBQ were computed (see Table 1).

- The level of agreement between mothers and fathers about their children's characteristics was considerable. Parents were in significant agreement on all three factors for boys and two of the three factors for girls.

3) RELATIONS BETWEEN CHILDREN'S SELF-CONCEPTS AND PARENTS' REPORTS OF TEMPERAMENT

In order to examine the congruence between children's self-concepts and parents' reports of the children's characteristics, Pearson correlations were computed.

- Fathers' reports of children's Effortful Control correlated significantly with the children's self-reported Self-Control (r (42) = .43, p < .01). The same correlation was significant in mothers' and children's reports (r (48) = .52, p < .001). In addition, there was a significant negative correlation between mothers' ratings of children's Extraversion and children's reported feelings of Rejection (r (47) = -.37, p = .01).

In order to investigate child-gender differences in the degree of agreement between parents and children, the correlations between fathers' and mothers' reports and children's self-reports were computed separately for boys and girls.

- There were no significant correlations between the temperament factors and the self-view factors of boys. However, there were similar significant correlations between parents' reports and girls' self-views (see Tables 2 and 3).

4) ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN CHILDREN'S SELF-CONCEPTS AND OBSERVED BEHAVIOR

- Overall, there were no significant correlations between the three self-view factors and the six scales of observed behavior.

- However, when computed separately for boys and girls, girls' self-reported Self-Control was correlated with their observed Sociability towards the stranger (r (23) = .52, p = .01). There were no significant associations between boys' self-view factors and their observed behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

1. THERE ARE GENDER DIFFERENCES IN 4-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN'S TEMPERAMENT AS REPORTED BY PARENTS AND AS ASSESSED IN THE LABORATORY.

2. THERE IS SIGNIFICANT AGREEMENT BETWEEN MOTHERS AND FATHERS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S TEMPERAMENT.

3. THE SELF-CONCEPT OF 4-YEAR-OLD GIRLS SHOWS A MEANINGFUL RELATION WITH PARENTS' REPORTS OF TEMPERAMENT. HOWEVER, THE SELF-CONCEPT OF 4-YEAR-OLD BOYS IS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY RELATED TO PARENTS' REPORTS OF TEMPERAMENT.

4. THE SELF-CONCEPT OF YOUNG GIRLS, BUT NOT OF YOUNG BOYS, SHOWS SOME MEANINGFUL RELATION TO OBSERVED BEHAVIOR.

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Table 1

Correlations between Fathers' and Mothers' CBQ Ratings for All Children, and for Boys and Girls Separately

	All Children	Boys	Girls
Factors:			
Extraversion	.58***	.69***	.43*
Neg. Affect.	.24	.47*	.02
Eff. Control	.56***	.55**	.71***

*$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$. ***$p \leq .001$.

Table 2

Correlations between Fathers' CBQ Factors and CSVQ Factors of Girls and Boys

	FATHERS' Ratings		
	Extraversion	Neg. Affect.	Eff. Control
GIRLS'			
Self-View			
Self-Control	.40	.17	.61**
Self-Acceptance	.30	-.16	-.22
Rejection	-.61**	-.19	.09
BOYS'			
Self-View			
Self-Control	-.24	.32	.37
Self-Acceptance	-.08	.00	.29
Rejection	-.07	.26	-.18

Note. Underlined correlations are significantly different from each other.

**p < .01.

Table 3

Correlations between Mothers' CBQ Factors and CSVQ Factors of Girls and Boys

	MOTHERS' Ratings		
	Extraversion	Neg. Affect.	Eff. Control
GIRLS'			
Self-View			
Self-Control	-.17	-.30	.62**
Self-Acceptance	.12	-.37	.05
Rejection	**-.67*** **	.31	-.07
BOYS'			
Self-View			
Self-Control	-.13	.24	.33
Self-Accept.	.01	.03	-.09
Rejection	**-.16**	-.16	.06

Note. Correlations in bold are significantly different from each other.

**p < .01. ***p = .001.